

Peculiarities and Anomalies of the late Epidemic.

This subject would appear at first view to be more curious than useful; but when it is considered how far the peculiarities and anomalies concomitant on a disease may tend to establish the identity of its character, it will be found not to be destitute of utility. It may also be of importance to the practitioner upon any new recurrence of the disease, to be apprised of its anomalies and the consequences to which they lead, and thereby saved from those perplexing embarrassments which new and singular appearances sometimes impose upon him.

It has been the practice of medical writers to denominate all catarrhs which have prevailed epidemically by one common appellation implying an identity of character. "From Sydenham upwards to Hippocrates it was known and is mentioned by the name of catarrhalis febris epidemica. Since Sydenham's time it has been variously named, but is now generally known by the name of influenza." How far this may be correct and proper requires investigation. In examining the history of epidemic catarrhs we find a very great diversity both in the symptoms and in the methods of cure; scarcely any two of them in immediate succession presenting a sameness of character. If nosological terms are to be continued in use, it is important that they should be applied with the utmost discrimination and strictest precision; otherwise unwary practitioners and others, seeing a method of treatment prescribed for a disease under the usual name by which it is known, will take it for their guide, right or wrong, and perhaps not discover their error until after the loss of several valuable lives. A great source of this want of precision in former times was doubtless the seldom recurrence of these epidemics, as according to Dr. Fothergill they had appeared at uncertain intervals in England during the two hundred and fifty years last preceding the year 64, on an average of only once in thirty one years; but unfortunately for us in modern times this excuse does not apply, for since the year 1768, they have returned in England upon an average of once in only about every six years, and in this country since the year 1757 the average has been once in only about every seven years. It prevailed in America in the years 1757, '61, '72, '81, '89, '90, 1807 and '16, so that in this ratio it may return under the observation of one man, during an ordinary lifetime, six or eight times, which affords but too ample an opportunity to industry and attentive remark to make accurate observations and useful distinctions.

Dr. Rush remarks that "the influenza passes with the utmost rapidity through a country, and affects the greatest number of people, in a given time, of any disease in the world," in which he is corroborated by many other writers. But our late epidemic was peculiarly slow in its progress in pervading the country. In its march from the northward to the southward its progress appears to have been only from about one hundred to two hundred and fifty miles per annum. In the winter of 1815 it was in Philadelphia; in the winter of 1815 it had advanced as far southward as Salisbury, N. C. and in this winter it has visited most parts of South-Carolina. Since its invasion of this State, its progress from place to place has been equally peculiar; appearing in spots or neighborhoods only thirty or forty miles distant from each other, at periods of four, five, six or eight weeks apart. It was also peculiarly capricious in the circumscribed locality of its prevalence, attacking one particular community, raging for eight or ten weeks, and then passing over a large intermediate tract of country and seizing on another circumscribed community. In this way it has been meandering through the State ever since early in last November, and at this time it is still raging in some neighborhoods adjacent to others where it prevailed early in the winter, and from which it had long since passed off.

It has been peculiar in raging with the greatest severity in the interior of the country, whilst the sea coast has been exempted or suffered comparatively but little. And yet in the interior of the state, the most swampy situations, margins of rivers and places most subject to the endemical autumnal bilious fevers, have suffered most severely from the epidemic.

It was likewise peculiar in its manifest predilection for male subjects in preference to females. The proportion of females attacked did not perhaps exceed one tenth or one fifteenth part; but some few who were attacked seemed to have the disease equally as violent as the males. Children under four or five years of age were remarkably exempted, and amongst children above that age the males most generally suffered. It was not peculiarly fatal to the aged, nor to such as had a prior tendency to pulmonary affections, but on the contrary some very old people recovered who had the disease severely; and, indeed, it fell with its greatest severity and mortality on the robust, and on such as were in the prime of life. Corpulent persons appeared to enjoy an exemption;—and it was thought that Europeans and the natives of the Eastern States were much more exempted than the natives of more southern latitudes. Females in a state of pregnancy were not more liable to abortions in this disease than in others of equal violence, which unhappily is not the case in epidemic catarrhs generally. To drunkards, as might have been expected, it was generally fatal.

This disease was peculiar in its universal tendency to determine on the chest in the form of pneumonia. For although a small proportion of cases determined to the head, blood-vessels only, or throat, yet the tendency to the chest was so general as almost to warrant the denomination of an epidemic pleurisy or peripneumony rather than that of influenza. It may also be remarked that relapses were more seldom than in ordinary influenzas. It was peculiarly under the influence of temperature and humidity. Upon the recurrence of cold damp weather, of which we have had an unusual share this winter, the cases immediately multiplied, and those who had been previously ill never fail-

ed to become worse. It was perhaps from this circumstance that it proved in many places peculiarly fatal to negroes, as they were more exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, and their lodgings generally cold and uncomfortable. Exposure to the external atmosphere and cold, seemed constantly to predispose to the disease, and hence, perhaps, is the reason why females, children and corpulent people were more exempted from it than others, as corpulence serves as a defence against the influence of cold.

In two anomalous cases in this town the local determination to the brain was so sudden and violent in two robust men as to occasion convulsions, without any premonitory symptoms. Both these cases proved fatal, one within 48 hours and the other within a few days. In a lad of 14 or 15 years of age, the disease was ushered in by a sudden attack of stupor. He was travelling on the road in company with some others and complained of nothing before he fell down in a state of insensibility. This case recovered. A pneumonic case occurred, of a typhus nature, accompanied with a cough in every respect resembling the whooping-cough, except that the matter of expectoration was uncommonly copious and purulent from the beginning. This is a recent case, and after a tedious illness seems likely to recover. In three pneumonic cases towards the period of the crisis the disease precipitated itself upon the extremities, producing an alarming state of phlegmonic inflammation, which terminated the constitutional disease by establishing copious suppurations. In two of these cases it fell upon the arms, and the inflammations and enormous swellings extended from the fingers to the shoulders. The suppurations took place around the elbow in both cases, forming extensive sinuses from which the discharge kept up for many weeks. These are both recovering, but threaten an anchylosis. The other case fell upon the leg, suppurated copiously and is doing well.

I was informed by the physicians of this place of three cases in which hemorrhages from one or both ears occurred, in which the patients lost from ten to sixteen ounces of blood. One of these cases recovered. Three or four cases occurred in which the eruption of a rash on the 2d or 3d day, put an end to the disease; and in one it appeared as late as the 4th or 5th week, in conjunction with the other usual symptoms attending the crisis, and seemed to be beneficial.

Two pneumonic cases occurred in which uncommon copious bronchial or pulmonary secretions took place at a late stage of the disease, and after the condition of the patients had given hopes for several days of convalescence. This secretion occurred suddenly and the matter of it was expectorated by an exhausting paroxysm of coughing. The quantity expectorated at one time was from about four ounces to two pounds, in the space of from fifteen minutes to two hours. In one of these cases it recurred periodically with nice precision, at the same hour and almost at the same minute in every twenty-four hours, for four or five times.

The matter of this secretion had an intermediate appearance between pus and mucus, of a white color with a taste not easily described, but more nearly resembling the taste of a raw egg than any thing else. This secretion was followed by evident and immediate relief to the chest. The respiration became more free, the lungs more easily expanded, the remaining pains and uneasiness about the chest were mitigated, and the convalescence was visibly more rapid.

These discharges gave an impression that they proceeded from the rupture of vomice or abscesses which had formed in the lungs. But that this opinion was erroneous is obvious from the following circumstances. The matter was obviously different from the matter of common abscesses as an experienced eye would readily perceive. If, however, it had been real pus yet this alone would fall very far short of being proof that it proceeded from an abscess; for it is a fact long since established that pus may be, and very often is formed from inflamed secreting surfaces, and the secreting surfaces of the bronchia most especially are liable to take on this kind of secretion. The expectoration of this matter was moreover regularly periodical after certain intervals. It continued at each period about the same length of time and then gradually but rather abruptly ceased; after which not a single particle of it could be expectorated by any effort of coughing, either spontaneous or intentional, until the next regular period of its recurrence. Now it is obvious that if this matter had proceeded from a ruptured abscess, however rapid and copious the first discharge might have been, yet a supply of more or less matter must have been constantly formed in it until the abscess was healed; and must necessarily have been brought up, from time to time, during the intervals, by coughing. To suppose the contrary we must believe each discharge to have been the consequence of the rupture of a distinct abscess and the more especially as each succeeding discharge and even the last was equally as copious as the first; and then we must admit the preposterous conclusion that each abscess was instantly healed upon being emptied. A conclusion, unfortunately for the subjects of pulmonary abscesses, contrary to all experience.

Upon the whole I conclude that these discharges were the effect of bronchial and pulmonary secretion; and that it was a mode of evacuation attending the protracted crisis of the disease by which the lungs were unloaded of infarctions and possibly the whole system relieved of offending matter; for it ought to be remarked that both these cases had long passed the usual period of termination of the disease without the usual symptoms of expectoration, &c. attending the crisis.

In very many pneumonic cases a pain remained on the seat of the inflammation during the whole time of convalescence. This pain from the circumstances of its being so suddenly variable, sometimes better and sometimes worse in the course of a few minutes, and seldom giving any uneasiness except by an expansion of the thorax or some exertion of the muscles about the part, was most probably of a rheumatic nature. In one case they seemed to occupy every intercostal muscle, giving considerable pain upon

every expansion of the chest, as by deep inspirations, &c. but occasioning little or none of uneasiness when these muscles were relaxed or only in their ordinary state of exertion. Although these pains were evidently seated in the intercostal muscles, yet there was an evident connexion between them and the state of the lungs, inasmuch that a few coughs and even small expectorations, would occasion a mitigation of them for some time.

I have given the principal peculiarities and anomalies that have attracted my attention, and beg leave to close this communication with a notice of some popular notions with regard to the prevention of this formidable disease. I am informed that the inhabitants of Williamsburgh district, where it has made great ravages, believe that the progress of the disease has been completely stopped by burning their woods, and it is said that several circumstances afford considerable grounds for the opinion. I am also informed that a gentleman in the town of Granby, where the mortality has been almost unparalleled had an early recourse to burning tar in his yard and about his doors. His family escaped the disease. Another gentleman of Camden, whose negroes were situated on his plantation not far from another where the negroes had experienced uncommon mortality, upon perceiving that the disease had made its appearance in one of his kitchens had recourse to the same expedient and the disease progressed no farther. In Fairfield district a notion has prevailed that those who were employed in clearing lands where great quantities of brush and wood have been necessarily burned, have been exempted from the disease. Is it impossible that these notions should have some foundation in truth? The products of the combustion of various kinds of vegetable matter may contain some active and potent agents. It is known to chymists that the combustion of several substances, and especially the resinous wood of pine, produces carburetted hydrogen-gas in very great abundance. This gas from its affinities with some other species of matter is capable by combinations of totally changing their properties. Is it then impossible that this substance should combine with the latent remote cause of the epidemic in the atmosphere and destroy its virulence? Or is it impossible that carburetted hydrogen-gas should so influence the animal system as to destroy its susceptibilities to the impressions of the remote cause? These ideas are altogetherly poetical but perhaps not too absurd to demand some attention; nor to forbid a further enquiry into the effects of combustion in arresting or destroying this all-devouring monster.

JAS. DAVIS.

Columbia, S. C. April 5, 1816.

Errata in last week's 'Account of the Epidemic.'—First column, line 18th from the top, for *colds* read *cold*; line 31st, read in between the words *or* and *being*—19th line from the bottom, for *for* read *of*. Second column—line 6, read in between the words *perhaps* and *nineteen*; line 41, for *dyspnea* read *dyspnoea*; line 46, for *infarction* read *infarction*; line 91, for *lymache*, read *cynanche*. Third column—line 14, insert the between the words *towards* and *decline*; line 48, for *confluence* read *conglum*; line 51, for *emphren* r. *emphren*; line 114 for *epistaxis* read *epistaxis*. Fourth column, line 12, for *exertion* read *exertions*.

FROM THE TELEGRAPH.

FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF COLUMBIA.

We noticed with much satisfaction, the first dawning of this respectable and worthy institution, in which all denominations of the pious and charitable united in an effort to relieve the wants, and increase the comforts of suffering indigence. In hopes that other communities will imitate so honorable an example, we take pleasure in publishing the following address and constitution of the society in this place.

"Mankind have no other means of expressing their love and gratitude to God, for the immense love and charity he has shewn them, than by practising all the acts of mercy in their power, one towards another. Every favor which he at any time bestows on man, lays him under an indispensable obligation to make God all the return of which he is capable. But how shall we repay that Almighty Being for the rich and distinguished blessings he hath vouchsafed to us? Can we ascend to the fountain of eternal glory? or enlarge the Majesty of Him, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain? Shall man, frail man! the creature of a day, hope to extend the happiness of his Creator? 'Who hath at any time known the counsel of God? Or who hath ascended up on high?' The only way by which we can remunerate his goodness and mercy, is by performing all the good deeds in our power; by relieving the wants of the distressed, by administering comfort to the unfortunate children of adversity, and in binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted and disconsolate. Our blessed Savior in discoursing to the Jews, on the important principles of religion, after having declared the love of God to be our first and greatest duty, immediately subjoined that most excellent rule of our faith, that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, and expressly declared that 'on those two commandments rest all the law and the prophets.' By the love of our neighbor, we are here to understand, the great and important duties of christian benevolence; charity to the poor, a zealous concern for our indigent brethren, 'and all those who are any ways afflicted in mind, body, or estate.' And that our Lord intended to impress this idea on the minds of his hearers, is evident from the nature of his conversation with the presumptuous lawyer in the gospel, who arrogantly enquired who was his neighbor? How admirable was the reply of the Divine Savior, in the beautiful and affecting narrative of the good Samaritan? How strongly does he there inculcate universal benevolence? The abashed enquirer stood confounded before his Lord, and was affectionately exhorted to imitate an amiable pattern of good works. And shall we seek to enquire, 'Lord who are our neighbors?' while they linger in our streets, and daily supplicate for the bread of life; while they anxiously wait at our doors for the scanty 'crumbs which fall from our tables.' Lo, the cry of the orphan is heard, and the weeping voice of the widow asking for the Heaven directed boon of charity! 'Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy,

the Lord shall deliver him in the day of trouble.' Psalm xli. 1.

We, the undersigned, convinced of these truths, and anxious to promote the good order and welfare of our fellow creatures, have associated ourselves into a society for the purpose of relieving all unfortunate persons who may be reduced by sickness or misfortune from a comfortable subsistence to poverty and distress—And that our views may be fully realized, and our exertions crowned with success, we have constituted rules for the good order and government of this society, and do pledge ourselves to support and maintain them.

Columbia, S. C. March 12th, 1816.

CONSTITUTION.

Article 1. The object of this society shall be the relief of all unfortunate persons—and it shall be denominated "The Female Benevolent Society of Columbia."

2. For carrying the purposes of the society into effect, there shall be annually appointed a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary—They shall be appointed by ballot, and a plurality of votes shall constitute a choice.

3. The duties of both secretary and treasurer, shall be performed by the treasurer and secretary, who shall from time to time, as the society may require, exhibit a report of their state of funds; and their account with the society shall be examined and settled at the close of every year, by a committee, whom the president shall appoint.

4. There shall be annually a meeting of the society in Columbia, at which time elections shall be held for president and treasurer.

5. It shall be the duty of the president to direct the secretary to notify the members of the time and place of every meeting, and to preside over and direct the affairs of the society with fidelity and zeal.

6. There shall every three months be a committee of five appointed by the president, which shall be denominated the *Visiting Committee*, whose duty it shall be to visit the sick and afflicted, distribute such supplies as may by them be deemed expedient, and to inform the president of all who may need the support of the society.

7. No person shall be considered a member of this society, until she shall have paid not less than one dollar; and not less than one dollar shall by each member be annually paid into the hands of the treasurer. The treasurer shall also receive all such donations, as the pious and benevolent may at any time make for the promotion of the purposes of the society.

8. The constitution shall not be altered unless it be at an annual meeting, with the consent of two thirds of the members, and the object of the society shall never be changed.

9. No money shall be distributed to any person who may come under the notice of the society—it shall be the duty of the visiting committee to purchase clothing and other necessities of life, which shall by them be distributed to the necessitous.

10. No money shall be paid by the treasurer without an order from the president, signed in behalf of the visiting committee.

11. The names of the officers of the society and the visiting committee, shall be sent (by the secretary) to all of the physicians—and they shall be requested to give information to the society, of any person, whom, in the course of their practice, they may find objects worthy the attention of the society.

12. No new member can be admitted into the society, without first sending a letter to the President, and then be voted in.

13. The members shall have the privilege of voting by proxy, when the absence of any one is unavoidable.

14. The president shall annually address a letter in behalf of the society, to the different clergy residing in Columbia, praying that charity sermons may be preached to their different congregations, and collections made for the benefit of the society.

15. All meetings of this society, shall be opened and concluded with prayer.

16. The anniversary meeting commences on the 10th of March 1816; the society to assemble at the Female Academy on the 16th, or the first Saturday after, and once every quarter—16th of June, 16th of September, and 16th December.

Officers of the Society.

Mrs. ELIZA DESAUSSEUR, President.
Mrs. MARY FISHER, Vice-President.
Mrs. CAROLINE GUIGNARD, Treasurer.
Mrs. ELEANOR PERCIVAL, Secretary.
Mrs. M'CORD,
Mrs. CLIFTON,
Mrs. SARAH FAUST,
Mrs. YOUNG,
Mrs. ARTHUR,

Visiting Committee.

COMMUNICATION.

Departed this life, at his residence in Lexington district, on the 26th of March, Mr. Mathias Wassinger. His illness was tedious and severe, but in this most distressing trial he evinced the magnanimity of an honest man and the patient resignation of a Christian; his family and numerous relatives have to deplore the loss of an affectionate member, and society cannot but feel the loss of a valuable citizen. It was particularly consoling to his friends to whom his general moral character was ever conspicuous, to witness the operation of a divine faith on his mind in the dark hour of death, he seemed undismayed, but left his bed of suffering under a strong and triumphant assurance of his entering into the favors of his Lord.

MORGAN & GUIREY,

HAVE just received at their Book-Store, a variety of BOOKS, among which are the following valuable publications:

Jefferson's Notes.
Moses's History.
Moses's Poems.
Cheltenham's Anatomy.
Knock's Winter Evenings.
Mayo's Ancient Geograp.
Hindoo Philosopher,
Moses's Univer. Gazetteer.
Brown's Poems.
Trial of Virtue.
Holidays at Home.
BLANK BOOKS, and
BLANK CARDS.
Stationery, &c. &c.

MORGAN & GUIREY,

HAVE just received at their Dry-Good Store, 150 pieces of Plain, Striped and Plaid NORTHEN HOMESPUN, which will be sold very low by the piece. Also, 20 Cans CUT NAILS, assorted sizes.

Columbia, April 9.

A BANK BILL.

WAS found by a Negro Boy, which the owner may have by describing it, and paying for this advertisement. Enquire at this Office.

April 9.